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Dr Timah Charlie Pascal Nyamsic is a 72-year-old UN Volunteer Medical Officer from Cameroon serving the UN Refugee Agency in Ethiopia.

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Bringing a world of experience to a UN Volunteer assignment

Dr Timah Charlie Pascal Nyamsic is a 72-year-old UN Volunteer from Cameroon. He is on his third volunteer assignment, and currently serves in Ethiopia. On the occasion of the International Day of Older Persons, Timah shares his experience and the value that his years of experience bring to the assignment.

I joined the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme in 2007, driven by my outgoing, resilient and result-driven personality and strong passion for working with the underprivileged.

I served in Burundi from 2007-2015 as a UN Volunteer Surgeon for the UN missions that existed then. I also served as a UN Volunteer Medical Officer with the World Health Organization (WHO) and Medical and Health Services

Manager (UNHCC) in Jijiga, Ethiopia, from 2018-2020.

In January 2020, I started a new assignment as a UN Volunteer Medical Officer with the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) in Gambella, Ethiopia.

Both Burundi and Ethiopia are multi-ethnic societies, with different tribes and a diverse culture, and some of their regions are in the process of recovery from serious conflicts.

All in a day's work

As a general surgeon, I contribute to the alleviation of suffering and respond to emergencies. I provide high quality medical care, manage surgery service and provide pre and post-operative treatment and procedures. My work is mainly focused on providing care to UN staff and their eligible dependents. With my support, UN personnel have good physical and mental wellbeing, and can confidently go to the field and carry out their duties.

Aside from that, I give health talks on various topics such as lifestyle changes, healthy eating, workplace safety, and disaster management. Lastly, to further long-term development, I developed business continuity plans, standard operational procedures on medical evacuation and training staff and drivers in basic first aid and essential life support.

“ As a volunteer, I have observed the visible changes that we were bringing about. In Burundi, besides the traditional volunteerism, we were able to witness the national volunteer programme being put in place. It was also meaningful to encourage multi-ethnic and multi-cultural integration, by promoting volunteer activities with local groups.

One thing that I look forward to is more opportunities where I can reach out to the underprivileged, as I had hoped to do from the start of my assignment with UNV.



The challenges I face

The biggest challenge that I have faced is being separated from my family, friends and relatives, as it gets lonely. The security issue is another challenge that we often face in the region. Due to the increased criminality, inter-community clashes, rebel attacks on government forces or peacekeepers, our accommodation is shared and heavily guarded by security guards.

Adapting to a new environment is always challenging. The tropical or subtropical climate was difficult for some UN Volunteers, especially those from non-tropical areas. Some have faced health challenges like malaria, HIV/AIDS, Dengue fever, COVID-19 and other ailments.

Lastly, as we all know, professionals in this era that need computing skills in order to work and I was no exception. I had to learn how to use and manage the computer.

Impact on my life and lessons learnt

My UN Volunteer assignments have instilled in me diligence, discipline,

determination and tolerance. I was also able to learn how to use my allowance judiciously, and most importantly, the spirit of advocacy for volunteering.

“ UN Volunteers are an inspiration. We can effectively and positively enrich the understanding of local and social realities. UNV interventions create bridges between UNV and the host community.

There are also many continuing education opportunities via e-campus, online training, zoom or virtual meetings, and UNV supports training financially.

Finally, as one of the mature UN Volunteers, I would like to highlight the value that older people can bring to their assignments, community and the world.

“ My experience was an asset to the clinic. It raised awareness of the fact that volunteers can be older people and the system benefits from their world of experience at an affordable cost.



East and Southern Africa

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